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The Arab League

Its Origin — Purposes —

Structure & Activities

THE ARAB INFORMATION CENTER

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This publication on the League of Arab States is the first of a series of INFORMATION PAPERS, providing background information on Arab affairs, situations and institutions. The series is prepared by our Research Section.

The interested reader may find the full text of the relevant documents cited in the following pages—i.e., the Protocol, Pact, Treaties and Agreements of the League—in a companion publication, Basic Documents of the Arab League, which is the first of our series of DOCUMENT COLLECTIONS, and which is published simultaneously with the present publication.

M. KAMIL A. RAHIM,
Ambassador



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Introduction

On 22 March 1945, representatives of seven Arab States—Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Trans-Jordan (now Jordan), and Yemen*—concluded their conference in Cairo by signing a historic document. The “Pact of the League of Arab States,” as that document was called, brought into being a voluntary association of the sovereign Arab States, thus reversing a trend towards dismemberment which had been initiated by European Powers a quarter of a century earlier.

The establishment of the Arab League—as the organization then created has come to be commonly known—is a landmark in the history of the Arab national movement. *It is not an isolated event; nor is it a final accomplishment.* The League’s genesis, in order to be adequately understood and appraised, and its destination, in order to be gauged with any measure of accuracy, must needs be envisioned within the total context of the Arab national awakening. The motives behind the League’s establishment are inseparable from the national aspirations of the Arab peoples; the League’s prospects and potentialities—whatever its short-range accomplishments or momentary fortunes may have been—cannot be abstracted from the totality of urges and hopes and determinations which inhabit the Arab soul.

The first section of the present study will place the concept of the League within the total setting of the Arab national movement, and retell the story of its establishment against the background of the history of the Arab world since the beginning of its modern revival. The purposes and the structure of the League will then be analyzed, in the light of the League’s Pact. But all this is merely half the story; the other half pertains to the activities of the League. “A pact or a charter,” Ambassador M. Kamil A. Rahim, representative of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, has observed, “only establishes an organization and defines its general purposes and structure; its character, on the other hand, is built in time, through its experiences and actions, its trials and errors, its grappling with emerging problems and its adjustment to new situations. As in the case of any living being, an organization *is* what it eventually *makes* of itself. The goals may either be implemented or approximated, or else abandoned and deviated from; the machinery, being but a means, may be paralyzed by inaction, distorted

*These seven States were the founding members of the League of Arab States. So far, only one other State has been admitted to the Organization: Libya. It joined the League in March 1953, shortly after becoming independent.

by abuse, or sharpened and bettered by careful and imaginative utilization: it is the actions, the accumulated precedents and the built-up traditions, that in the last resort constitute the *substance* of an organization. 'By their fruits ye shall know them'; by their record shall organizations be known and appraised." We have no desire to eulogize the League of Arab States: it is our intention merely to let the record speak.

I

Origin And Purposes Of The League

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Arab world—drowning for centuries under Ottoman rule—was profoundly stirred by a rapid succession of events. As varied and intrinsically-unrelated as were the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon and the appearance of American and European missionaries on Lebanese and Syrian shores, these events made an impact on the Arab mind. They aroused national consciousness and stimulated demands for action to achieve freedom and progress.

During the nineteenth century, these national objectives gained steadily in clarity and appeal; to the same extent, the Arab national movement gained momentum. In the meantime, however, the Arab peoples were being subjected to uneven political fortunes. North Africa, west of Egypt, was snatched piece-meal by European Powers; its political life was severed from that of Arab regions further east. Egypt was virtually drawn out of the Ottoman orbit, first by Muhammad Ali (who also initiated far-reaching measures for the modernization and industrialization of the country) and later on by the British. The Arabian Peninsula, Greater Syria and Iraq, however, remained under Ottoman rule. Accordingly, the national awakening, stimulated in the Arab world earlier in the century, came to follow distinct, though parallel, courses. On the eve of the First World War, therefore, the Arab national movement had been dichotomized into an Egyptian and an east-Arab movement—the former preoccupied with the struggle against British occupation, and the latter contending with Ottoman despotism. The two movements, however, had never been completely separated. Some integration was achieved by such factors as Muhammad Ali's campaigns in Syria and the Peninsula, and the migration of large numbers of Syrian national leaders (poets, writers, journalists) to Egypt.

World War I offered the national movement in Syria, Iraq and the Peninsula an opportunity for expressing itself in concrete and efficacious action. Under the leadership of Sherif Hussein (the great-grandfather of the present monarchs of Iraq and Jordan), the Arab Revolt was declared in 1916. The military significance of the Revolt for the Allied cause—its successful diversion of German and Turkish troops from the European to the Middle Eastern theatres of war, and its transformation of the Arab peoples into a friendly ally of the Democratic camp—have been authoritatively attested to by those who were in a position to know:

Allied, as well as German and Turkish, generals and statesmen. But, apart from its significant contributions to the cause of the Allies, the Arab Revolt had its own national objectives. These objectives—as communicated to and supported by the Allies, through the British Government—were: emancipation from Ottoman rule, and the establishment of an independent, united Arab State.

The War indeed abolished Ottoman rule, by putting an end to the very existence of the moribund Empire. But the post-War settlement fell far short of satisfying the Arab national aspirations. For the Arabs were denied both *independence* and *unity*. Independence was denied by the Mandate System, and unity was prevented by the arbitrary dismemberment of the area into a number of political entities. The pre-War Ottoman Empire, which had treated the region as a political and economic unit under one rule, was broken up into a mosaic of separate political and economic fragments under British and French rule.

Thus with the post-World War I settlement, the Arab national movement was given a severe setback. An independent and united Arab state would have proceeded promptly towards initiating and implementing measures for badly-needed reform, progress, development and modernization. But, divided and ruled by foreigners, the Arabs could either submit or concentrate their energies on national emancipation. Thus, of the three objectives of independence, unity and progress, the Arab national movement chose independence as the most urgent and fundamental.

The history of the ensuing twenty-five years is a story of struggle—a single-minded struggle for independence. While, throughout this period, the idea of unity, as the ultimate goal to be achieved after independence, remained alive, the immediate preoccupation was with emancipation.

When, in the course of the ensuing decades, the Arab States won their independence one after the other, the hitherto-suspended goal of unity came to command once more the attention of the Arabs. But the struggles and the experiences of those twenty-five eventful years had not failed to leave their mark on the Arab situation and the Arab mind. The conditions for, and the concept of, unity had changed. The form and degree of unity, possible and desirable in the early 1940's—unlike the unity envisioned in the 1920's—expressed itself institutionally in the Arab League.

* * *

It was not until 1943 that the question of Arab unity was responsibility explored by Arab leaders with a view to translating the popular yearning for unity into a concrete political reality. The problem was

tackled in bilateral consultations between the Prime Minister of Egypt and representatives of the six other newly independent Arab States, which were followed by a conference of the leaders of the seven Arab States at Alexandria in September 1944 and at Cairo in March 1945. These were the first official efforts of leaders of the Arab States to knit the broken fragments into a unity—a task which, for twenty-five years, had been overshadowed by the more urgent goal of independence.

The timing of these conferences was directly related to the political events taking place in the Arab world. For, by 1943, seven Arab States had won their independence—although the majority of them, owing to the circumstances of the Second World War and to their individual relationships with the respective European Powers hitherto dominating their fortunes, were still limited in their exercise of sovereignty by treaties negotiated and signed under duress or by the presence of occupation forces on their soil. Notwithstanding these limitations of their sovereignty, the Arab States had by 1943 won a degree of independence sufficient to enable them to turn their attention to the question of Arab unity. That explains why, in the light of the history of the Arab world, the establishment of the League could neither have been seriously contemplated much earlier than 1943 nor justifiably delayed beyond that date. The time was ripe, as it had never been since the First World War, for restoring to the dismembered Arab world some measure of its former unity.

Besides popular desire, there were other factors which rendered the need for unity more tangible and compelling. The experiences of the Second World War had created a fresh, realistic awareness of the strategic and economic unity of the Arab world. A world-wide trend towards regional organization was clear, and Arabs of all walks of life felt that there were more compelling reasons for the Arab States to be integrated within an "Arab regional organization" than for nations less intimately related to one another ethnically, linguistically, historically, economically or strategically. Finally, recent political experiences (such as the London Conference, where the Arab States collectively discussed the Palestine problem with the British Government) had demonstrated the political advantages of concerted Arab action.

* * *

When, under the impact of these factors, Arab statesmen met to study the form of Arab unity and the methods to achieve it, it became evident that there was far more agreement among them on the *principle* than on the *form* of that unity.

The legacy of twenty-five years of division weighed heavily on the Arab mind. By struggling individually, each for its own independence, the Arab peoples in the seven countries had fallen prey to a provincialism which it now proved hard to transcend. Distinct political experiences had solidified into traditions.

If unity was to be achieved, therefore, it had to be conceived of in terms of the new, post-World War II Arab situation, not in terms of the obsolete, pre-World War I conditions. New concepts and new institutions, applicable to the new situation, had to be formulated. Hence the idealistic concept of immediate and outright unity, championed by the pan-Arabists, was not even seriously considered by the conferees at Alexandria and Cairo (1944-1945)—who represented sovereign states and thought in terms of practical steps of cooperation, rather than idealistic formulae for organic unity.

Having chosen "limited, functional unity" as a goal and "gradualism" as a method, Arab leadership faced two main alternative forms of unity. The choice was between an organization representing *all* the Arab States but establishing *looser* ties among them, on the one hand, and an organization in which *fewer* Arab States participated, but which was *more compact and effective*, on the other hand. The choice was made emphatically in favor of the first alternative.

Thus the concept of Arab unity which emerged from the deliberations of 1943-1945 represents at one and the same time the triumph of the *universalists*, as far as territorial scope was concerned, and of the *gradualists* and *moderates*, as far as functional scope was concerned. However, the door was left open for the establishment of closer ties among the Arab States. Thus Article 9 of the Pact authorizes member-States "which desire to establish closer cooperation and stronger bonds than are provided by this Pact" to "conclude agreements to that end".

* * *

The League is thus a regional organization of sovereign States designed to strengthen the close ties linking those States, and to coordinate their policies and activities and direct them towards the common good of all the Arab countries.

The Preamble and Article 2 of the Pact define the purposes of the League and specify the fields in which coordination of policies and efforts may be sought. According to the Preamble, the League aims at "strengthening the close relations and numerous ties which link the Arab States;" and it seeks to "support and stabilize these ties upon a basis of respect for the independence and sovereignty of these States, and to direct their efforts towards the common good of all the Arab

countries, the improvement of their status, the security of their future, [and] the realization of their aspirations and hopes.” Article 2 repeats that the purpose of the League is “the strengthening of the relations between the member-States; the coordination of their policies in order to achieve cooperation between them and to safeguard their independence and sovereignty,” and specifies the fields in which the close cooperation of the member-States shall be promoted: economic and financial affairs, communications, cultural affairs, social affairs, health problems and legal matters.

Besides defining the purposes of the League and establishing the machinery with which it can achieve those purposes, the Pact also establishes the elements of an Arab collective security system (Article 6) and prohibits the resort to force by member-States in order to resolve disputes (Article 5) as well as any efforts by a member-State to change the established system of government of another (Article 8).

II

The Structure Of The League

As laid down by the Pact, the structure of the League is relatively simple. It consists of a council, special committees, and a secretariat-general. In the course of the ten years of its existence, however, the League has established two additional specialized councils and several bureaus; and the secretariat-general has been organized into a number of departments.

A. The Council

The supreme body of the League is the Council, which is composed of representatives of all member-States, each State having a single vote. According to the Pact, the Council is entrusted with the following tasks:

1. In a general way, it is the task of the Council "to achieve the realization of the objectives of the League." (Article 2).

2. The Council also supervises the agreements concluded by the member-States on all matters falling within the competence of the League. (Article 2). The principles of these agreements and the extent of cooperation among member-States are, in the first instance, laid down by the special committees concerned, and are formulated as draft agreements. The Council examines such draft agreements before they are submitted to the member-States. (Article 4).

3. The Council decides upon the means by which the League is to cooperate with other international bodies in order to guarantee security and peace and regulate economic and social relations. (Article 2).

4. The Council may deliberate on international disputes which involve member-States. Three categories of such disputes are distinguished in the Pact, as follows:

- (a) Disputes, arising among member-States, which do not concern a State's independence, sovereignty or territorial integrity. If the parties to a dispute of this nature have recourse to the Council for the settlement of their differences, the decision of the Council shall be "enforceable and obligatory"; the States between whom the difference has arisen, however, shall not participate in the deliberations and decisions of the Council. (Article 5).

(b) Disputes which threaten to lead to war between member-States, or between members and non-members of the League. In the case of such disputes, the Council shall mediate "with a view to bringing about their reconciliation". Decisions of arbitration and mediation shall be taken by majority vote. (Article 5).

(c) Cases of aggression or threat of aggression by a non-member against a member-State. The immediate convocation of the Council may, in such a case, be demanded by the attacked or threatened State; and the Council shall by unanimous decision determine the measures necessary to repulse the aggression. (Article 6).

5. The Council determines the conditions under which representatives of Arab countries which are not members of the League may participate in the work of the special committees, and the rules governing their representation and participation. (Article 4).

6. The Council examines the draft budget prepared by the Secretary-General. It also determines the share of the expenses to be borne by each member-State. (Article 13).

7. Finally, the Council appoints the Secretary-General of the League, approves the appointment of the Assistant Secretaries-General and the principal officials, and establishes the administrative regulations governing matters relating to the Staff. (Article 12).

Decisions of the Council are divided into unanimous and majority decisions. According to Article 7 of the Pact, "unanimous decisions of the Council shall be binding upon all member-States of the League; majority decisions shall be binding only upon those States which have accepted them. In either case, the decisions of the Council shall be enforced in each member-State according to its respective basic laws." (Article 7).

The Council convenes in ordinary session twice a year—in March and in October. It also convenes in extraordinary session upon the request of two member-States, whenever the need arises. The Council convenes at the invitation of the Secretary-General. (Articles 11 and 15). Representatives of the member-States alternately assume the presidency of the Council at each of its ordinary sessions. (Article 15).

B. The Special Committees

Article 2 of the Pact enumerates the specific matters on which the close cooperation of the member-States shall be sought by the League, as follows: *economic and financial affairs* (including commercial relations, customs, currency, and questions of agriculture and industry);

communications (including railroads, roads, aviation, navigation, telegraphs, and posts); *cultural affairs*; *legal matters* (including nationality, passports, visas, execution of judgments and extradition of criminals); *social affairs*; and *health problems*.

For each of these categories of questions, the Pact provides for the establishment of a "special committee", in which all member-States are represented. Representatives of other Arab countries (which are not members of the League, owing to their status as non-self-governing territories) may also take part in the work of these committees—under the conditions laid down by the Council. (Article 4).

The special committees are charged with the task of laying down the principles of agreement among member-States, in those matters which are within the competence of the committee in question. Such principles, formulated as draft agreements, are then examined by the Council, prior to their submission to the member-States. (Article 4).

C. The Secretariat-General

The third principal organ of the League, established by the Pact, is the permanent Secretariat-General. It consists of a Secretary-General (appointed by the Council, by a two-thirds majority vote), Assistant Secretaries-General (appointed by the Secretary-General, with the approval of the Council), and "an appropriate number of officials". (Article 12).

The Secretary-General, besides heading the Staff of the Secretariat, prepares the draft of the budget of the League, which he submits to the Council for approval before the beginning of each fiscal year. (Article 13).

The Secretariat-General is divided into different departments, which implement the various decisions and resolutions of the respective committees.

D. Other Bodies

In addition to these bodies, established by the Pact, there are other principal and subsidiary bodies which have been set up since the founding of the League. Chief among these are the following:

1. *The Economic Council*: Established by the Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Treaty of 1950, it is composed of the Ministers of Economic Affairs of all the contracting States or their representatives. Its decisions are taken by majority vote. The Council is entrusted with the task of fulfilling the purposes of the Treaty; it may, however, in the

performance of its duties, seek the cooperation of the Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs established by the Pact. (Article 8 of the Treaty).

2. *The Joint Defence Council:* This Council was also set up by the Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Treaty of 1950, for the implementation of the provisions of that Treaty relating to joint defense. It consists of the Foreign Ministers and the Defense Ministers of the contracting States, or their representatives. Decisions taken by a two-thirds majority are binding on all the contracting States. (Article 6 of the Treaty). The Council, in the performance of its tasks, is assisted by the Permanent Military Commission, described below.

3. *The Permanent Military Commission:* Together with the two Councils mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, this Commission was established in the afore-mentioned Treaty. It is composed of representatives of the General Staffs of the armies of the contracting States. Its main purpose is to draw up plans of joint defense and their implementation, by drafting the necessary reports and submitting them to the Joint Defense Council. (Article 5 of the Treaty).

4. *Special Bureaus:* In addition, a number of bureaus for special purposes have been set up. These include the Refugee Office, the Boycott Bureau and the Anti-Narcotics Bureau.

III

The Activities of the League

A. Political and Security

When the Pact establishing the League was signed, the majority of the signatory States were not enjoying full sovereignty. The League, committed to assisting member-States in "the realization of their aspirations", channeled some of its initial efforts into this direction.

Consequently, soon after it came into being, the League was occupied in meeting French provocative action in Syria and Lebanon in 1945. The unity and determination of the Arab League States in the matter contributed to the fact that a year later French forces were withdrawn from the Levant, and Syria and Lebanon achieved their full independence, after the issue had been brought to the United Nations Security Council.

The League's first action concerning Egypt's national aspirations came in March, 1946. The Council of the League unanimously supported Egyptian demands for the evacuation of British troops, and requested the Secretary-General to communicate its decision to the British Government. It also advised the member-States to pursue individually a similar course. In the following years the League persistently reiterated its support of the Egyptian cause, and, in the last stages of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, it linked the issue of Western efforts for Middle Eastern defense to an early settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian question.

The League's efforts to achieve an equitable solution of the Palestine problem are well known, as are its activities in furthering the national aspirations of other dependent Arab territories.

In concert with Asian countries, members of the Asian-African group, the members of the League of Arab States succeeded in bringing the situation in Arab North Africa to the attention of the world through the United Nations.

In accordance with the provision in the Pact calling upon non-self-governing Arab countries to participate in its work, the League supported the establishment and maintenance of a North African Office in Cairo, with representatives from Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Spanish Morocco. These representatives attend Council and Committee meetings, in an advisory capacity, when matters relating to their respective countries are discussed.

The former Italian colony of Libya was aided in its quest for independence. The League sponsored and supported the work of the *Committee for the Liberation of Libya*, and through diplomatic contacts with the representatives of a large number of states, the way was paved for United Nations' action in favor of Libya's independence. Moreover, the League contributed substantially to the preservation of the unity of Libya at a time when there was serious danger that it would be divided into three separate entities. On 28 March 1953, shortly after achieving its independence, Libya became the eighth member of the Arab League.

The member-States of the League have actively represented their countries at the United Nations and in the various specialized agencies.¹

The aim of the League to be recognized by the United Nations as a "regional organization" was partially realized on 1 November 1950, when the United Nations General Assembly voted that an invitation be extended to the Secretary-General of the Arab League to attend its meetings as an observer.

Article 6 of the League Pact provides that, "in case of aggression, or threat of aggression by a State against a member-State, the State which has been attacked or threatened with aggression may demand an immediate meeting of the Council", which "shall determine the necessary measures to repel this aggression".

In order to implement this provision; "... in view of the desire of the [Arab] Governments to consolidate relations between the States of the Arab League, to maintain their independence and their mutual heritage;" and "in accordance with the desire of their peoples to cooperate for the realization of mutual defense and the maintenance of security and peace according to the principles of both the Arab League Pact and the United Nations Charter, together with the aims of the said Pacts," the member-States of the League signed, on 17 June 1950, the Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Treaty, which became effective in August 1952, when the parliaments of the necessary number of States had ratified it.

The principle of collective defense, established by this Treaty, is clearly stated: "The Contracting States consider any [act of] armed aggression made against any one or more of them, or against their forces, to be directed against them all. Therefore, in accordance with the right of self-defense . . . they undertake to go without delay to the aid of the State or States against which such an act of aggression is made."

¹ Only six of the eight member-States of the League are members of the United Nations. The applications of the other two, Jordan and Libya, for admission to the U.N., have hitherto been turned down owing to Soviet opposition.

B. Economic

In order to "bring about security and prosperity in the Arab countries; . . . to raise the standard of living in them; . . . to cooperate in the development of their economies and the exploitation of their natural resources; to facilitate the exchange of their respective agricultural and industrial products; and generally to organize and coordinate their economic activities and to conclude the necessary inter-Arab agreements to realize such aims," the Economic Council, described earlier, was established by the above-mentioned Treaty of 1950.

Among the major accomplishments of the Economic Council were the conclusion on 7 September 1953 of two Conventions: one for "Facilitating Trade Exchange and Regulating Transit Trade", and another for the "Settlement of Current Transactions and the Transfer of Capital" between the States of the Arab League.

The first Convention provides, among other things, that agricultural products, livestock and raw materials, originating from the territory of one of the Contracting States, shall be exempted from customs and import duties; that manufactured products shall enjoy most-favored nation treatment as regards customs and import duties; that the Contracting Parties shall grant most-favored nation treatment to each other in import and export permits; that goods, the export of which from the territory of any of the Contracting Parties is prohibited, shall be confiscated if imported into any one of these countries; and that the Contracting Parties facilitate transit across their territories.

The second Convention, concerning the "Settlement of Payments of Current Transactions and the Transfer of Capital between States of the Arab League", deals mainly with the facilitation of the convertibility of currencies for the payment for goods exported from one country to another, the payment of profits and dividends from capital investments, the costs of diplomatic and consular missions, the expenses of students, and the payment of insurance premiums.

In addition to these two conventions, the League's efforts in promoting economic cooperation among the Arab States resulted in the founding of the Federation of Commercial, Industrial and Agricultural Chambers, and the creation of the Arab Tourist Association.

Moreover, the League has given much attention to the question of communications. It has studied several projects, chief among which were those of civil aviation between the Arab States, of an Arab Maritime Company, and of a route connecting the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf. Subsequently, it concluded Agreements, establishing the Arab Postal Union, and the Arab Telecommunications and Radio Communications Union. These two Unions are now in operation, serving

as information and consultation centers, and facilitating the exchange of technicians and the standardization of equipment and procedure.

C. Cultural and Educational

One of the major concerns of the League has been to stimulate activity in the cultural field. As early as 20 November 1946, and upon the recommendations of the Cultural Committee, the League concluded a Cultural Treaty aiming at the integration of educational systems in the Arab countries and the recreation of an Arab culture, based on the heritage of the Arabs and enriched by the achievements of modern knowledge.

Among the specific provisions of this treaty are the following:

1. An increased exchange of teachers, technicians, and students between the member-States;
2. The promotion of cultural and educational conferences;
3. The establishment of educational and research institutes;
4. The encouragement of the translation of foreign works into Arabic;
5. The standardization of scientific terms used in Arabic;
6. The standardization of the curricula in elementary and secondary schools, and the standardization of requirements for higher degrees; and
7. The encouragement of legislation on authors' copyrights.

The execution of this ambitious program has been entrusted to four bodies, namely, the Cultural Committee, the Permanent Bureau of the Cultural Committee, the Local Branches of the Cultural Committee, and the Cultural Department of the Secretariat-General.

The first of these bodies is a permanent committee which consists of one or more representatives from each State. It meets once or twice every year in one of the Arab States, to formulate plans for coordinating the cultural activities of the member-States, and to review and supervise the work of the Cultural Department.

The Committee's Permanent Bureau, in which every member-State is represented by a single delegate, meets once a month in Cairo to review the work of the Cultural Department, and to transmit the viewpoint of the Arab Governments on current projects and the necessary technical information needed from the member countries.

The Cultural Committee has a local branch in every member-State. These local branches are attached to the Ministries of Education, and include representatives of various local organizations. Their task is the

implementation of the Committee's programs in their respective countries.

The Cultural Department is a part of the League's Secretariat. It proposes and implements programs of cultural cooperation in the Arab world, and takes an active part in the development and promotion of Arabic culture through institutions established for this express purpose. One of its primary tasks has been the unification and broadening of the educational systems in the Arab States. In order to achieve this, it sponsored two conferences on the subject.

The First Cultural Conference was held in Lebanon during the summer of 1947 to consider ways of standardizing the educational curricula of the member countries, and establishing a common minimum of material covered in history, geography, Arabic, and civics. It was attended by 300 prominent educators from all the Arab States, who emphasized, both in their discussions and in their recommendations, the social aim of education and the need of instilling the democratic principles into the minds of the students.

The Second Cultural Conference was held in Egypt during the summer of 1950. It studied the expansion of the curricula in secondary schools and colleges in order to equip the student better to meet the demands of a modern life, complicated by the introduction of new techniques. It also considered reports on the implementation of the resolutions adopted at the first conference. The proceedings of both conferences were published by the Cultural Department.

Other conferences were also sponsored and organized by the Cultural Department. An Archaeological Conference, attended by Arab archaeologists and experts, met in Damascus during the summer of 1947. Not only were papers presented on recent discoveries and excavations in the member countries, but ways of standardizing and broadening legislation concerning archaeology in the various Arab states were also discussed, and suggestions and recommendations were drawn up. A resolution was adopted, calling for the establishment by the League of an inter-Arab archeological committee. Moreover, the Conference investigated the question of standardizing archeological terminology in Arabic, and adopted a resolution providing for the compilation and publication of an Art and Archeological dictionary in Arabic. The complete proceedings of the Conference were published by the Department.

In August 1953, the First Arab Sports Tournament was organized, and it was an excellent occasion for Arab youth to meet. In 1954, the first Arab Scouts Congress was held in Syria.

In the spring of 1952, ceremonies were held in Baghdad to honor the millenary anniversary of the death of the great Arab philosopher, Ibn-Sina (Avicenna). Orientalists from all over the world presented lectures

and participated in discussions on Ibn-Sina's work in the fields of philosophy, science, music, history, and medicine. To observe this event, the Department published the proceedings both in Arabic and in English, under the title, "The Golden Book of the Commemoration of the Thousandth Anniversary of Ibn-Sina."

On 1 September 1953, the first Arab Scientific Conference was convened in Egypt. Participating Arab scientists attended seminars on the organization of scientific research, current scientific problems, and their solution; and papers were presented by qualified experts on their own fields of specialization. The Department also published the proceedings of this conference.

Under the Department, the Manuscript Institute was established in 1946 for the purpose of making the Arabic manuscripts in public and private collections more generally known and easily accessible to scholars and workers in the field. A general index, based on the various manuscript indices, has been compiled and published, while important manuscripts, accumulated by special missions sent for this specific purpose to Turkey, India, Syria and Lebanon, have been photographed and published. To date, reproductions of about 10,000 such manuscripts have been secured and are on file at the Arab League Library, where they, as well as other material, are made available to scholars.

Upon the recommendation of the Cultural Committee, an educational museum, containing documents, statistics, diagrams, charts, and graphs, illustrating the development of education in the Arab States during the past 30 years, was established. Exhibits include charts showing general comparisons amongst the Arab countries in the field of education, and copies of the textbooks and school curricula employed in the different Arab States, since the introduction of recent reforms. The museum also contains all the material and publications dealing with and bearing upon education in the Arab countries.

In order to channel and stimulate constructive thinking in the fields of political science, economics, sociology, and literature, the League has, for some years, awarded prizes for outstanding books, dealing with topics sometimes chosen by the League. Among the books that received prizes were: *Bases of a New Arab Society*, by Dr. Munif Razaz, *Contemporary Literary Trends in the Arab World*, by Prof. Anis Makdisi, *The Novel in Modern Arabic Literature*, by Mohamed Najim, and *America as I Saw It*, by Amin Mumaiz.

The cultural program of the League includes also the translation of foreign books into Arabic, the preparation of an Arab encyclopaedia, and the standardization of requirements for higher degrees. Work is progressing on the first item; a plan providing, among other things, for

contributions from leading scholars, has been drawn up for the second; while the third is still at the discussion and planning stage.

In the field of education, the Cultural Department has, as a result of its research on education in the Arab countries, published, annually, for four successive years, the *Yearbook for Arabic Culture*,—a monumental work containing statistics, legislation, and other detailed information on education in the Arab world. It has provided member-States with information and guidance in the matter of combatting illiteracy, and in the education of the children of Palestinian Arab refugees. It has also aided in the unification of Arab policy in cultural matters at meetings of international organizations, and developed many channels of cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which has been represented at many of the conferences sponsored by the Department.

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In addition to the cultural activities of the above-mentioned bodies, charged with the responsibility of implementing the provisions of the Cultural Treaty, the League's Council has at times sponsored directly the initiation of certain cultural programs. Chief among these has been the establishment in Cairo, in 1953, of an Institute of Advanced Arab Studies, for training scholars and specialists in Arab affairs; promoting the dissemination of Arabic culture through teaching, lecturing, writing and publishing; and the reforming of the educational systems so as to make possible the utilization of the achievements of modern knowledge. The Institute offers studies in linguistics and literature, history and geography, economics, sociology and international affairs, and law, and in the relationships of all these to Arab nationalism and the Arab national movement. The nucleus of a specialized library, containing well over 10,000 volumes, has been formed by the Institute. Students from all the Arab countries are enrolled in the Institute. They undertake studies in any of the fields enumerated above, and, at the end of a two-year program, they receive the Institute's diploma.

D. Social

The Social Department of the General Secretariat has also been active. Jointly with the United Nations, it has sponsored four social welfare seminars, attended by delegates from the Arab states and the Arab League, as well as United Nations experts, and other individuals, specialized or interested in social welfare. At one or more of these conferences, observers from France, the United Kingdom and the United States have also been present.

The First Social Welfare Seminar was held in Beirut from 15 August to 5 September 1949. Being the first seminar of its kind in the area, it surveyed the whole field of social welfare in the Middle East. The main subjects on the agenda were:

- (1) The administration of social welfare (including planning), the importance of the cultural setting, and the training of workers;
- (2) Rural social centers;
- (3) Social services for nomadic tribes;
- (4) Child health services, homeless children, and the problem of child labor;
- (5) Social problems in Middle Eastern education;
- (6) Economic factors underlying social problems in the Middle East; and
- (7) The effect of industrial development on labor and welfare problems.

The Second Social Welfare Seminar, held in Cairo from 22 November to 14 December 1950, confined itself to a single topic—Rural Welfare. Such aspects of the subject as rural basic education, village planning, rural health and hygiene, maternal and child health, rural training centers, rural economic development and its relation to social welfare, and cooperatives, were discussed.

The Third Social Welfare Seminar convened in Damascus on 8 December 1952, and adjourned on the 20th of the same month. This seminar concerned itself with an examination of the existing social services in the Arab countries. At the preparatory stage, a questionnaire was sent out to the Ministries of Social Affairs in the Arab countries, requesting detailed information on the activities of governmental and private social service agencies. Not only did the information obtained provide a basis for discussion on ways of improving social services, but the submission of the questionnaire also prompted many non-governmental welfare agencies to send representatives to explain their work at these meetings. Thus the seminar resulted in a fruitful exchange of ideas on common problems and the ways of dealing with them.

One very important subject discussed at this third conference was the methods used, by both governmental agencies and private organizations, to finance social assistance projects. It was brought out that the system of endowments for charitable purposes (*waqfs*), and the tax for the relief of the poor (*zakat*), still played a not-inconsiderable part in the financing of social welfare programs in the Arab countries. It was also of interest to the conferees to learn of the existence of many welfare agencies in the Arab countries—many of which were initiated by

women's organizations—which, heretofore, had had no publicity, and had sought none.

Experts and interested agencies gathered for the Fourth Social Welfare Seminar at Baghdad in the spring of 1954 to examine aspects of "Social Welfare in the Agricultural Development and Industrialization of the Arab States." From 6 until 21 March, the delegates discussed, among other things, the use of audio-visual aids; social welfare in the settlement of Bedouin tribes; social welfare and the development of rural industries; social welfare programs for workers in the petroleum industry; and the role of social welfare in the growing industrialization of urban areas.

One of the resolutions adopted by the Fourth Social Welfare Seminar provided for a meeting of the Arab Ministers of Social Affairs for the purpose of studying and implementing the recommendations of this and previous seminars. The Council of the League, however, recommended that this meeting consist of experts in social welfare, representing the Arab countries, U.N. and U.N.E.S.C.O. specialists, as well as teachers and workers in the field. The Council also recommended that these meetings be held annually.

Accordingly, the Conference of Sociologists met in Cairo from 5 to 10 March, 1955, to discuss the following items:

1. Examination of the reports of the Social Affairs Ministers during 1954, and reviewing the progress made and the difficulties encountered by each of the Arab States in implementing the recommendations of the four Social Welfare Seminars;

2. Studying the technical assistance programs offered by the United Nations to the Arab States, and by the Arab States to each other; and

3. The choice of a subject for the forthcoming Fifth Social Welfare Seminar; to be held in Jidda, Saudi Arabia, early in 1956. The subject chosen was the "development of the local community in the Arab world". The conferees, in making this choice almost unanimously, expressed the view that, in addition to its world importance, this topic offers the possibility of an intelligent and comprehensive study of reconstructing Arab society and developing public responsibility at the "grass-roots" level.

In addition to these seminars and conferences, the League has also been concerned with the founding of model social centers, and supplying them with the necessary specialists. The first such social center was founded at Baghdad, and an attempt is at present being made to establish another in Lebanon.

In the field of sanitation, the League has also manifested great interest. It has taken an active part in the meetings held by the World Health Organization and in various regional health conferences, while the

Permanent Anti-Narcotics Bureau still carries on its efforts in fighting the planting, smuggling, and trading in narcotic drugs.

E. Legal

The Legal Department, under the direction of the Legal Committee, has made progress in the unification of laws and the coordination of legislative activities in the Arab States. As a result of these efforts, six Agreements, embodying statutes of private international law for the Arab countries, were concluded under the auspices of the Council of the League.

The first of these, an "Agreement on the Execution of Judgments", was concluded on 14 September 1952. It stipulates that any final judgment involving civil or commercial rights or payments, or any sentence imposed by a court in any of the member-States in a penal matter, shall be operative in all other member-States.

The second Agreement, on "Extradition", was concluded on the same date, for the purpose of establishing "close collaboration for the surrender of absconding offenders". Extradition is declared mandatory "when the person sought for is being pursued, charged with, or convicted of . . . a crime or misdemeanor (committed on the territory of the State requesting extradition), punishable by imprisonment for one year or more, . . . or where the person wanted has been already sentenced to no less than two months' imprisonment." In case the offense has been committed outside the territories of both States, "extradition shall be mandatory only when the offense committed is punishable in accordance with the laws of both States."

The third Agreement, also signed on the same date, was drawn up for the purpose of facilitating the serving of summonses and the mutual exchange of the jurisdictional power of the courts of the member-States.

The fourth, an "Agreement Concerning the Nationality of Arabs Residing in Countries Other than those of their Origin," was concluded on 23 September 1952. This agreement provides that every person, whose country of origin is a member-State of the Arab League, and who is a resident of another member-State, shall be considered a citizen of his country of origin, provided he has not acquired citizenship of a third country.

The fifth, an "Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the League of Arab States," was concluded on 10 May 1953. It provides *inter alia* that the League shall possess juridical personality; that its property and assets shall enjoy immunity from every form of legal process; and that its movable or immovable property shall be exempt from all direct taxes, from custom, duties, and from prohibitions and

restrictions on imports and exports in respect of articles imported or exported by the League for its official use. It also provides legal immunity for the League's staff, its missions, and its experts.

The most recent Agreement, on "Citizenship", was concluded on 5 April 1954. It provides that the wife of a citizen of a member-State, if she is a citizen of another member-State and unless she opts otherwise, may acquire the citizenship of her husband's country; and that she may regain her original citizenship if her husband dies or if the marriage is dissolved by divorce. The Agreement also provides that no citizen of a member-State may acquire the nationality of another member-State without the approval of the former State. Finally, the Agreement provides that a child born in a member-State of which his father is a citizen but which is not his father's country of origin, may opt—within a year from becoming 18 years of age—to acquire the citizenship of either his father's country of origin or the country in which he was born.

Besides these six Agreements, a number of other projects and draft-agreements are still being studied. These include an Agreement enabling Arab lawyers to plead before the courts of all Contracting States, and projects for the establishment of a permanent bureau for combatting crime, a common police institution, and an Arab Court of Justice.

Conclusion

The preceding pages have described the origin, purposes and structure of the League, and surveyed its accomplishments. It is evident that the League, which represents neither the beginning nor the consummation of the Arab quest for unity, nevertheless constitutes a stage in the progress of the Arab States towards the strengthening of the close ties that bind them and the coordination of their policies and actions.

The League's life has had its ups-and-downs. Like any other living being, this regional organization has been subject to the vicissitudes of life and the varied problems of adjustment and growth. To assess the achievements of the League, it is only just to recall that, during the last ten years, it was constantly attempting to reconcile the sovereignty of its members with the requirements of concerted action; and that it was acting within a troubled international setting, and beset by interferences from foreign Powers reluctant to adjust themselves to the new independent status of hitherto-dependent States.

Speaking on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Pact of the Arab League, Mr. Abdel Khaleq Hassouna, the Secretary-General, said:

"On this very day ten years ago Arab delegations met in Cairo amidst rejoicing, to declare that the Arabs were one nation, that in their union there was power, and in their power there was independence, and in their independence there was an awakening, and in their awakening there was the security and welfare of the Arabs and of the whole world.

"Thus the Arab League and the Arab League Pact were born. It is proper therefore that we cast a glance at the past ten years to inquire about the fate of that concept, the concept of union, independence, and awakening; to see if it is still alive in our minds and if our hearts still throb with it; and to discover how far we stand from the goal on which we concentrated on the day we met at Alexandria and the day we met in Cairo, endeavoring to revive our unity which had become a reality through the Arab League Pact.

"If we examine the facts honestly and sincerely, we will find that that concept is stronger today and more deeply rooted than at any other epoch. In fact, it has become so deeply engraved on our minds that it has become an article of faith. We not only believe that it is essential, but we also believe that we cannot live

without it—and we must all endeavor to realize it, no matter how far distances and opinions may separate us from each other. . . .

“The voices we hear from every direction, urging us to increase our activity and our speed, and the criticisms of those who in their enthusiasm and impetuosity seek perfection, are conclusive evidence of the national awakening, and a proof that the original concept is still alive in our minds and our hearts.”

After surveying the various activities of the League, the Secretary-General went on to say:

“When we seek unity and endeavor to attain its noble objects, we must not forget that we are facing many internal and external difficulties which appear and disappear from time to time, and which may be of a light or a severe nature. The cloud which recently appeared in the Arab horizons was one of those clouds which will appear from time to time and which we hope will not discourage us or breathe fear into our hearts. With loyal collaboration and strong will, we will solve our problems and overcome our difficulties.”

Reading List

The following publications, in the English language, may be of help to the reader who is interested in obtaining more knowledge on some aspects of the activities of the League. Inclusion of a publication in this list, however, does not necessarily imply approval of all contents thereof.

1. "The Cultural Department of the League of Arab States: Its Organization and Programme." *International Social Science Bulletin*. Volume V, No. 4, 1953.
2. *U.N. Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States in the Middle East*. United Nations Documents No. E/CN. 5/175/Rev. 1—11 July 1950.
3. *Second U.N. Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States in the Middle East*. United Nations Document No. ST/TAA/SER.C/1—3 July 1951.
4. *Second Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States of the Middle East*. Cairo: Ministry of Social Affairs, 1950.
5. *Third U.N. Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States in the Middle East*. United Nations Document No. ST/TAA/SER.C/12—30 December 1953.
6. *U.N. Third Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States*. Damascus: Syrian Government, 1952.
7. *U.N. Fourth Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States; Social Welfare in the Agricultural Development and Industrialization of the Arab States*. Baghdad: Ministry of Social Affairs, 1954.
8. Hourani, Cecil, "The Arab League in Perspective." *The Middle East Journal*. Volume I, No. 2, April 1947.
9. *The Arab World and the Arab League*. Washington: The Arab Office.
10. Khadduri, Majid, "The Scheme of Fertile Crescent Unity: A Study in Inter-Arab Relations," in *The Near East and the Great Powers*, edited by R. Frye. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 1951.

